



By TED LEWIS

Washington, April 18.—The Kennedy Administration isn't saying so, but the anti-Castro invasion of Cuba has put the prestige of the Central Intelligence Agency on the line because of what our cloak and dagger operatives have been doing in the Caribbean area for the last year or more.

Their somewhat secret efforts, in accordance with this government's own policy, have embraced the passing out of funds and also, behind the scenes, the supplying of expert advice on how best to stage a revolt. For these and other reasons, the present calculated gamble to overthrow Fidel Castro is considered to have had a green light from the CIA. Should it fail, CIA chief Allen Dulles and all his topflight hemispherical agents will be the whipping boys, whether deserved or not.

Because these facts of life are known in the CIA and in the State Department, the very idea that the revolution may fail is being rejected.

The attitude is that there cannot be any "if" question about the revolt's success or failure. The revolution just has to succeed. This makes sense, although those who say it must not fail are well aware of this government's present unqualified "non-intervention" policy.

Our intelligence officials, those in the Pentagon and State Department as well as the CIA, are in solid agreement that unless Castro is stopped now, it will be too late to stop him without use of U. S. planes and equipment and "technical advisers" if not troops, which is more likely.

This viewpoint is not open to much argument. What would be the effect of an invasion failure? Castro, it is agreed, would have his prestige boosted throughout always volatile Latin America. His own government would be strengthened, his ties with the Communist world sealed and the threat of rockets "90 miles from our shores" would be real, not just the propaganda fulminations of Nikita Khrushchev when he talked of offering such "gifts" two years ago.

Timing of the Revolt Was Approved

The Kennedy Administration, facing up to this dire consequence of a Castro victory, would prefer to abandon its policy of non-intervention if such action was imperative for the success of the present invasion. That at least is the brief of those convinced that Castro must be stopped now, no matter what the results are so far as our relations with other Latin American republics are concerned.

CIA activities in connection with the staging of the present revolt may have been exaggerated in their importance, but it is known that the timing of the invasion was approved. It is doubtful that this approval would have been forthcoming unless our intelligence agents had reason to feel confident that the undertaking would succeed.

They felt confident because they had reports from intelligence sources which they believed they could rely on. The reports were to the effect that Castro's air force was now in a sorry way, that air strikes by invading forces would meet little if no opposition, that command of the air by the invaders could be assured.



Allen Dulles
His CIA's prestige at stake

Depending on the Reliable Reports

This situation would not hold true in another month, it was pointed out, for Castro fliers have almost completed training in Czechoslovakia to pilot the Russian MIGs which Russia has supplied. Some MIGs are already reported in the current fighting.

There were similarly reliable reports which indicated that once landings had been secured, defections in Castro's army were certain, even in the "hard core" of 80,000 elite militiamen on whom the dictator must rely to stay in power.

It was on the basis of such reports that the anti-Castro Cubans mounted their offensive.

It was on the basis of the same reports—pointing to the success of an "all-Cuban"-led invasion—that the Kennedy Administration felt free to proclaim its doctrine of American nonintervention in Cuba and simply express its best wishes and moral support.

While there is a grave chance that the revolt may fail, those in the Administration who were convinced of its success from the start remained just as optimistic today.

The intelligence boys still considered the risk was worth taking—that it was bound to be a calculated gamble, that an invasion would have to be a calculated gamble at any time.

Prestige on Single Throw of the Dice

As for the CIA's involvement, the risk was one the intelligence agency could not avoid some responsibility for. The necessity of staking its own prestige on a single throw of the dice never had to be faced before, and it obviously was not to CIA chief Dulles' liking.

In the past, the CIA has been able to extricate itself from any blame concerning possible faulty intelligence. This was true when the British and French made their abortive strike to seize the Suez Canal. There were suspicions that CIA had failed to get any advance tip.

In the U-2 incident there were suspicions that the CIA had been at fault. The spy plane had CIA approval, but the CIA made out a good case.

All the CIA said it did was ask, and get, a White House go-ahead on the basis that a U-2 flight should be made at the time. The diplomatic reaction to a failure was the Administration's responsibility, not CIA's.

Cuba is different. And Dulles knows that if the invasion succeeds, the CIA will get the credit and Congress will be ready again to supply with no questions asked the funds which the intelligence agency requires for its global hush-hush operations.

If the invasion is a flop, watch out for a Congressional explosion aimed at finally lifting the secrecy lid over the CIA, which spends annually at least \$600 million of taxpayers' money without having to account for a single dollar.